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Sent: Sunday, March 05, 2006 4:59 AM
To: MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov
Cc: jwolfe@igc.org
Subject: MLPAComments:

To Whom in May Concern,

All the proposed Central Coast MPA packages allow recreational fishing in State Marine Conservation Areas (SMCAs) in south Monterey Bay and Carmel Bays. This small region is the most popular diving area along the western United States for non-consumptive recreational SCUBA divers. Natural unexploited underwater habitats are highly valued by non-consumptive recreational divers - it's tremendously exciting to discover enormous rockfish, cabezon and ling cod while diving.

In providing marine life protection, as well as recreational and research opportunities consistent with Goal 3 Objective 1 for the Central Coast, Package S falls far short of Package 2. Package 2 protects with State Marine Reserves (SMRs) the heavily dived areas from Breakwater to Hopkins, off Pacific Grove, and along the reefs east from the Pinnacles past Pescadero Point to Pescadero Rocks and Dali's Reef. Like all the packages, Package 2 also has SMCAs at Pacific Grove and Carmel Bay that allow recreational fishing - but unlike Package S, Package 2 includes an important SMCA fishing regulation: while spearfishing is allowed, spearfishing contests are banned.

Spearfishing contests in SMCAs disgrace the very term "Conservation Area." Such contests:

- 1. target big reproductive fish - that is, the "big mothers" (contestants score 1 pt per pound) . This both undermines fish populations' reproductive capacity and exerts genetic pressure to select for smaller size.**
- 2. target biodiversity - competitors are rewarded for killing rare species (contestants score 10 pts per species) - such as the large Treefish shot at the May Pacific Grove contest this year - ditto for the four large Vermillion rockfish taken at this year's contest in Carmel Bay.**
- 3. "shoot the scenery" - removing large rare fish of great value to non-consumptive recreational users at heavily used shore-accessed dive sites ('sharing the resource' does not mean a handful of spearfishermen can remove all the large fish that hundreds of divers would otherwise enjoy viewing).**
- 4. undermine the conservation ethics of reasonable sustainable take for consumptive users**
- 5. favor a very small minority of divers who participate in spearfishing competitions, over all other divers, as these contests strip large fish from popular shore dive sites.**

A survey of local Monterey dive shops estimates that only 5% of dive shop customers spearfish (see file attached for details of that survey). And only a small fraction of

spearfishing divers participate in spearfishing contests. Yet those spearfishing contests deny hundreds of recreational divers the opportunity view and photograph large fish that would otherwise frequent the reefs along the most popular shore dive sites of Pacific Grove and Carmel Bay.

These contests have an enormous impact on small heavily-used reefs - taking out hundreds of large long-lived fish within a few short hours (typically 1,000 to 2,500 lbs of fish). The impact on the fish populations is obvious to any diver diving these reefs before and after the contests. The contests revisit the same reefs every two or three years.

A "no spearfishing contest" rule for nearshore SMCAs in the Pacific Grove and Carmel Bay SMCAs would be widely supported by the public, and by the great majority of recreational divers. This regulation should be part of any Package that purports to honor the spirit and intent of the Marine Life Protection Act.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration in this matter.

Regards,

Captain Wayne R. Hasson, President

Oceans for Youth Foundation

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